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Baker, Newton Diehl

An address delivered by... Newton D. Baker...

State College, Pa.

1920

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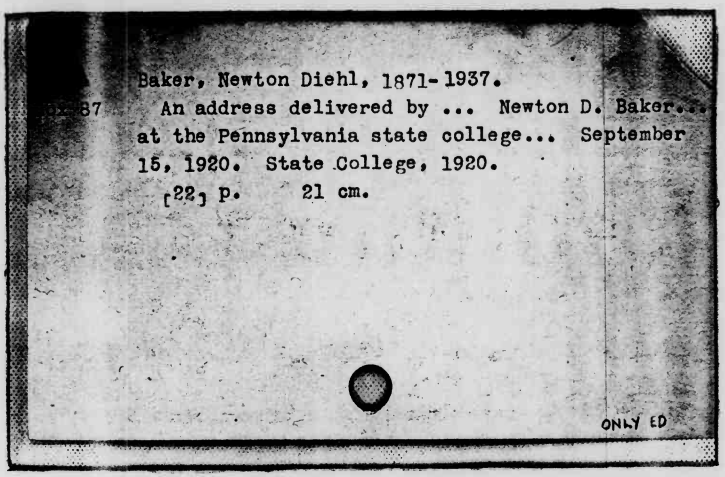
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An address delivered by ... Newton D. Baker... at the Pennsylvania state college... September 15, 1920. State College, 1920.
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Box 87
Gift of the President

AN ADDRESS

delivered by the

Honorable Newton D. Baker

Secretary of War

at

The Pennsylvania State College

at the opening of the

College Year

September 15, 1920

Printed by the College,
State College, Pa.
1920

Oct 12, 1920 Inv

Students of the College, Faculty and Friends:

This is a land-grant college. Last year 1800 students took part in the work of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps. In the upper classes, however, I am told their participation in that instruction was voluntary and only a very limited number of men availed themselves of the opportunity. As Secretary of War I am deeply interested in the work which the Reserve Corps is doing, and I am glad to have this opportunity to address you in the hope that what I say will have the effect of making it clear to the student body of this college and of all our colleges that training is useful alike to them and to the Nation. Unless that fact can be made clear, we can not expect the ambitious and aggressive youth of this country to divert their attention from their academic and scientific studies and take on even elementary training in military science. I remember too well the pressure of my own college days to feel any uncertainty about this. The world of mind was opening up to me then; there was intense eagerness on the part of my college associates to equip themselves for their careers in life, and there was an equally intense curiosity, of a high and helpful kind, a curiosity which sought its satisfaction in the things which can be learned from books. The student

who comes to college brings with him the eagerness of youth, but usually he has uncertain and immature objectives. As he enters the campus he confronts the ideals of life for which the college stands; they soon begin to make certain his uncertainties, to settle his doubts, and to steady him with definite views and aims.

The college stands for culture, which Godkin once called "the ability to do easily the things which one does not like to do," but which is perhaps better defined as the acquisition of enough knowledge about the main subjects of liberal learning to have a generous and appreciative attitude toward knowledge in general. The college stands for thoroughness, and the student soon feels that surface attainments do not wear and that he must really know and really understand. The college stands for intense specialization, and the student realizes that, however broad his culture and however generous his general information, there must be some one subject upon which he is master alike of the broad outlines and the intimate details. With these and other academic ideals pressing upon him, the student seeks to eliminate all that is unnecessary and all that is profitless, in order that he may accomplish the serious task which college education means.

It is a curious proof of the power of these academic ideals that most of our colleges have been obliged to establish compulsory forms of physical exercise in order to prevent our young men from neglecting their bodies, and yet those who are wise and who look at life in retrospect realize that the body may not be sacrificed without ultimately weakening the basis upon which mental activity rests, and then at least a moderate amount of time given to the perfection of the body is a direct aid in the cultivation and strengthening of the mind.

I am not here, however, to make any general appeal for physical exercise. I saw the other day where some famous expert in such matters had reduced the whole subject to a minimum by declaring that adequate exercise could be secured by walking on our tiptoes five minutes at a time, three times a day. If this receipt is sound, we have at last reduced the care of the body to capsule form, and when we have reduced the body's nourishment in similar fashion we can take our food in pills and our exercise by standing on our tiptoes while we think; and then, if some kindly philosopher will invent condensed sleep, we will be able to take a spoonful or two of that, and the whole blessed twenty-four hours will be free for the expansion of the mind and wide-reaching attempts of the imagination and the reason. If the Reserve Officers' Training Corps therefore offered only exercise, I should not prescribe it; but it does more than that for the

individual in its lessons of coordination, cooperation, and discipline and as an aspect of patriotic service to the State which undershoots the rest of our education with a moral and ethical basis of immense value.

We have lately come through a great war. In it the United States was called upon to mobilize itself as a nation, and the problems presented differed from those we had ever faced before. It was all on a far larger scale; in the Spanish War the military force organized in the United States was relatively small; in the Civil War the armies were large but the operations spread out over years and the general life of the Nation, while disturbed, was not completely and fundamentally changed. Modern war, however, is an industrial art, and when an industrial nation engages in it there must be a complete diversion of its industries from their peace-time activity and a new ordering of the life and habits of its people. Our mobilization in this war consisted not merely in the selection and training of men, but it meant the mobilization of the labor and thought of all the men, women and children in the nation and their concentration upon a single objective, success in our military enterprise. Facing so many involved problems, we not unnaturally met many difficulties and delays which were vexatious and aften seemed perilous. In an incredibly short space of time, however, the production of war materials assumed huge proportions, and the whole vast industrial organization of America was converted into a second line of defense and became the basis upon which our fighting armies in France rested. All of this had to be directed and guided to a certain extent by men with some military knowledge. The needs of armies had to be understood and the task would have been simpler had there been a wider knowledge throughout the country generally of the conditions under which men and soldiers move with success and safety.

The man power problem presented by the war was early and easily solved. The enactment of the Draft Law at the outset of the war gave us an unfailing supply of men and gave them by a plan which, recognizing the universality of the obligation of the citizen, and recognizing also the importance of maintaining industrial production at its highest efficiency, enabled us to select for service as soldiers those best adapted to that part of the task, those who were young and strong and whose absence from home would cause the least dependency, and who were not as yet so integrated into industry as to disorganize it by their absence.

One problem in all this vast and hurried preparation presented itself with peculiar force, the selection and training of officers. An army has a single objective the de-

feat of its enemy. In ordered series of ranks its organization reaches down from the supreme commander to the private. The final responsibility of authority rests in the supreme commander, but his plans must be intelligently carried out, and so in the varying ranks there must be men trained to understand and trained to execute the several parts of the task which are distributed. They must be men whose characters command respect,, whose minds and bodies are disciplined, and who in the hour of emergency can grasp the details of complex situations and make accurate decisions in the interest of the safety and success of those entrusted to their care. The training of officers is therefore based upon a more careful selection and a more prolonged discipline than is required for the larger group of men who make up the rank and file of the forces. The officer must know more than his men and his knowledge must be usable knowledge, knowledge acquired by experience and habit.

The answer to the need for officers in the great war was the establishment of training schools. Fortunately, General Wood had established the Plattsburgh Training Camp; it became the model, and the college-bred men of the country gathered into a large number of officers' schools and devoted themselves to an intensive course of preparation. We were in the war nineteen months. At the time of the armistice we had more than 200,000 officers in the service, and schools and camps were still in progress, training other men for use with the larger forces in preparation both at home and abroad. This great need could not have been met had it not been for the training which the men of America had been receiving in military schools, the National Guard, and other voluntary activities which gave some preliminary knowledge of military things. It could not have been met had there not been in America the spirit which the collegeman gets on the athletic field. It would have been far more easily and more quickly met had there been in the country a great body of men who had made military training a part of their college equipment.

Peace-time conditions in the United States do not justify a large standing army. It is the hope of all humane men that gradual disarmament can be brought about to reduce the terrible burden which competitive armament has in recent years imposed upon the economic resources of nations, and here in the United States we are rapidly making the standing army a school in which enlisted men will acquire both academic and vocational education, so that they may return to civil life after their period of enlistment, trained to assume places in industry and commerce more profitable to themselves and more

fruitful to the national economy. We must, however, recognize the fact that wars do come in spite of men's best efforts to prevent them, and when they come they come swiftly and under modern conditions involve immense armies instantly ready to act. As a nation, therefore, we have an interest in preparedness. I realize that that term has a forbidding sound to many who hate war for its wastefulness, its cruelty ,and its hard materialism, but after all every invention which makes simpler the production of steel adds to our national strength and adds to our military preparedness. Every fertilizing process which makes the earth more fruitful similarly makes us economically stronger and adds to our military strength; and in like measure, every element in the training of men which makes them wiser, more eager, physically stronger, adds to the national strength a force valuable alike in the pursuit of the arts of peace and in the response which we can make when the demand for armed defense of our national existence and rights arises.

We are not, therefore, seeking to encourage a military spirit by introducing elementary military training into colleges. Indeed, those who know most about war are those who most earnestly seek to avoid it—only the ignorant or the wicked could light-heartedly seek to embark their nation in war under modern conditions—but we are seeking by the establishment of the Reserve Officers' Traning Corps to give a great body of young men a basis upon which can be built capacity for command and leadership should a national emergency require their service.

The R. O. T. C. movement has grown steadily. At the close of the academic year 1920 there were 208 senior units having a total enrollment of 43,598 students; and 126 junior units having an enrollment of 44,777 students; and there were assigned to the training of these units more than 400 officers.

The R. O. T. C. was represented this year in 46 of the essentially military secondary schools. In these institutions the cadets are habitually in uniform, continually under military discipline, and receive generally more strictly military instruction and training than in the civil institutions. Their graduates upon entering college have already acquired the fundamental training and disciplinary instruction essential to the efficient pursuit of the advanced R. O. T. C. courses. A considerable proportion of them are already competent to exercise commissioned and noncommissioned rank in the military departments of the colleges which they enter. A few of the schools provide a military instruction of so high a grade that they have been authorized to organize units of the senior division and offer the advanced course. It

is proposed in the future to conduct no senior units in secondary schools except such as may be able to qualify under the conditions set forth in paragraph 9 of S. R. No. 44.

The annual "Honor School" inspection of 1920 disclosed the fact that in the essentially military schools training of a high character of efficiency is being very generally conducted.

During the past year, units of the R. O. T. C. have been maintained in the public high schools of 46 cities with an enrolment of 27,605 students. Many of these units have a limited enrolment and are established in cities and towns with the smaller population. With the proven popularity and undoubted success of the R .O. T. C., many of the larger cities now desire the establishment of units in their high schools, but because of the limited number of officers available for R. O. T. C. duty prior to the passage of the Army Reorganization Bill, it has not been possible to grant their requests. With additional instructional personnel available, it would be practicable to materially increase the number of high school units. The R. O. T. C. in the public high schools is regarded as an important factor in the general development and stimulation of patriotism, good citizenship, and physical improvement of the nation's youth. It is Americanization of the best form to the boys of foreign birth. It has generally been accorded the hearty support and encouragement of the various Boards of Education and the general public.

The reactions of the R. O. T. C. upon the Army at large will prove decidedly beneficial, and it will be found that the officers returning to duty with troops after a four-year college tour are much improved in their instructional methods and knowledge of how to teach young soldiers. The officers at these schools and colleges have opportunities far beyond those which come to officers of equal rank with troops. They have heavy responsibilities of an administrative and executive character. They are called upon to adjust themselves to other interests and to exercise tact, diplomacy, and authority to a degree that does not come normally to regimental officers with troops in time of peace. In their association with the faculty members they are brought into close contact with men of culture and high education and association which can not but prove stimulating. In teaching college men they are handling the best and highest type of American manhood and are required to exert their best efforts in order to appear to advantage. The scientific and laboratory facilities provided at the institutions, particularly in the engineer and technical departments, offer an opportunity for the development of improved methods of instruction. The units of the different arms in the institutions are placed in positions

of relative comparison one with another, in the eyes of the faculty and students, and this unconsciously stimulates the respective officers to improve and enrich their courses. In the large land-grant institutions, where the enrolment is upwards of 1,500 students and where there are four or more different units, the senior officer's duties are more difficult of successful fulfillment than would be the case were he commanding an Army brigade in time of peace. Officers of conspicuous ability and of high military accomplishments are needed to effectively develop and direct such military departments. It is worthy of note that the coeducational system of education at many of these institutions affords opportunity for familiarizing the future leaders of women voters with the benefits of military training.

During the World War the United States mobilized approximately 4,800,000 men in the armed forces of the country. Of these, 4,000,000 were in the military service. Of the latter, 200,000 were appointed commissioned officers. The greatest problem with which the War Department had to contend and with which it will have to contend in future similar emergencies, lies in the procurement of a sufficient number of trained men to fill the commissioned ranks in the lower grades.

It is expected that the principal source of such procurement in the future will be found in the R. O. T. C. The year 1920 is the first in which an appreciable number of students has completed the advanced course and the requisite number of camps to make them eligible for commissions in the Reserve Corps.

It is thought that probably 5,000 represents the maximum figure which the R. O. T. C. may be expected to annually provide. Assuming that the usefulness of those so commissioned will on the average continue for about ten years, it becomes evident that this rate of production must be constantly maintained. The R. O. T. C. has only been in active operation for about three years, and as yet not enough students have completed the prescribed course to provide reserve officers in any number approximating the above figure. It is hoped to obtain this year about three hundred. This number will materially increase each year until the maximum figure is reached.

Because of the uncertainty as to the future status of officers of the Reserve Corps, pending the reorganization of the Army, a very few of the graduates of the R. O. T. C. have applied for commissions in the Officers' Reserve Corps during the year. The recent legislation definitely fixes this status and it is thought that a considerable number of the 1920 graduates will apply for and be granted commissions. In June, 1920, 982 students completed the advanced course, and of these, 483 are con-

sidered eligible for commissions, the balance not yet having attained the legal age of 21. Each succeeding year will increase the number until the normal flow of eligibles is established. It is planned to initiate action in the R. O. T. C. branch to influence all graduates of the advanced course, who are considered qualified for commissions, to make application therefor.

The R. O. T. C project has met with pronounced success during the past year, and has increased in favor with both the students and the educational authorities. A high standard of student spirit and morale has developed in many institutions and constant efforts are made to support and increase this spirit wherever the units are in operation. Most of the colleges and schools have been very liberal in the allotment of academic credits toward graduation for R. O. T. C. courses. At one university it was even proposed to grant a special degree in the subject of military art. Another institution has placed the military courses upon an equivalent basis with such subjects as civil and mechanical engineering. The War Department has received inquiries from various institutions as to whether a course of study and list of subjects might not be indicated upon which a student could elect a "major" in military art.

It is required that every student who enters the R. O. T. C. be subjected to a rigid physical examination and this has resulted in many cases in revealing physical defects of which the student was either ignorant, or to which he had remained indifferent. The early correction of such defects and the appreciation of their seriousness has thus been made possible.

Military tournaments and exhibition drills and interorganization and college contests in rifle marksmanship tend materially to arouse enthusiasm and promote student morale. Particular attention has been given the whole subject of rifle and pistol shooting both as a military accomplishment and as a sport. In this connection, it may be noted that the civilian societies and rifle organizations fostered by the principal small arms manufacturing companies have rendered valuable assistance. Student interest has been further aroused by the granting of school and college "letters" similar to those given for athletic participation, to those composing the institution rifle teams. .

Particular attention has been given to the problem of insuring a larger proportion of students continuing the military training throughout their four years of college life, and ultimately applying for a reserve commission. Only such students represent the real finished product of the R. O. T. C. system and fulfill the purposes of the law.

Previous to the World War, a very small percentage of students in the colleges, particularly in the

land-grant institutions, continued in the military department after the sophomore year which terminated the compulsory period. A young man who completes but two years training is not qualified to receive a reserve commission and although his experience should constitute something of an asset to the country for national defense, it is, nevertheless, not a fulfillment of the purpose of the R. O. T. C. The course of the student through the R. O. T. C. has three election steps before he is passed into the reserve corps and the success of the system as a means of officer procurement for the Reserve Corps must be largely judged by the number who elect to continue their affiliation to the logical end..

During the past year there were at a maximum 4,568 students in the advanced course, which comprised about 8 per cent. of the total number in the senior division.

With the exception of 1916-17, the year it was initiated, the past school year has been the first that the R. O. T. C. has been afforded the opportunity of operation under favorable circumstances and in time of peace.

The results attained have given ample reason for the belief that the system is fundamentally sound as a peace time measure for the training and procurement of prospective personnel for the Officers' Reserve Corps. The character of the training and instruction given, the recognition accorded the military departments by the institutional authorities in the allotment of time, academic credit toward graduation, and the greater interest and adherence manifested by the students, justifies the general conclusion that the degree of improvement which may be expected of the R. O. T. C. in the future will be dependent upon the support given it by the government.

The resources in the shape of personnel, equipment and supervision, placed at the disposition of such a training system will determine the results. Great as has been the advance during the past year beyond the accomplishments of the many years preceeding the World War, the present standards in quality and quantity do not represent the limit of possibilities. It is evident that with proper governmental support there will be continued progress, a greater enrichment of the courses offered, a higher degree of training, and a broader fulfillment of the needs of national defense in the next five years.

The one phase of the R. O .T. C. curriculum which elicits probably the greatest degree of interest from the students themselves and from the general public, is that connected with summer training camps. For the American man and boy there is something fascinating in the idea of going under canvas; of getting away for a while from the softer side and of getting into the elemental atmos-

phere of camp life. It is inspiring evidence of our national hardiness and a state of mind deserving of the most sympathetic consideration. This desire for contact with the great out-of-doors lends itself most effectively to the needs of the broader military training possible to accomplish only when those to be instructed can be separated from the distracting interests of every day affairs and placed in an environment calculated to bring their mental and physical energies to bear upon the business in hand to the desirable degree.

It is fundamentally important that the students of the military arts and sciences shall actually live the life of the soldier, partake of his hardships, and get to know his problems and their solutions, in order that there may be formed in the students' minds a correct attitude toward these things and a lively conception of duty and a sense of comradeship which are the elements that cement the members of a military body and make it strong.

In the R. O. T. C. instruction camps the War Department is rapidly developing one of the most potent factors for the sane preparedness of our nation's defenses that has yet been put into operation. The twelve instruction camps conducted in widely scattered sections of the country during the summer of this year were attended by an aggregate of 6,228 students from universities, colleges, and secondary schools in which R. O. T. C. units have been established. These young men were transported to and from the camps, housed, subsisted, uniformed and cared for in every way at the expense of the government. They were instructed by carefully selected officers and noncommissioned officers whose whole hearted interest was centered in the improvement and welfare of the students. They were given the benefit of the most up-to-date instruction with the most modern equipment and armament from the minutia of camp routine to the actual manning and firing recent types of our efficient guns; the actual observation of artillery fire from observation balloons; the actual operation of motor-driven vehicles; and in innumerable phases of military training no pains were spared to make the camp both instructive and interesting.

The students entered into the activities of their camp with a spirit of earnestness and enthusiam that not only was sustained throughout the six weeks of their training, but actually mounted higher with each week. Upon the termination of the camps these 6,228 young Americans left for their homes with the unqualified commendation of their instructors and a record of achievements of which they and the nation may well be proud.

The R. O. T. C. at the Pennsylvania State College is, therefore, part of a nation-wide activity.

Students from this institution who enter the Reserve, with commissions as officers, will find themselves members of a company gathered from all over the nation who stand ready and are trained to serve should an emergency arise. In addition to that, they will find that something has been added by this training to their general equipment. The mind often takes its color from the habits of the body; skill of finger, deftness of touch, speed in running, strength of arms, are all qualities upon which the mind learns to rely and from which it acquires characteristics in its own operations. The experience of the great colleges in this country which have maintained R. O. T. C. units shows that the men who participate in the military activities are more successful as students, perhaps because a disciplined mind and a more confident intellectual operation the natural accompaniments of a disciplined body.

As the years go by, and the list of Reserve officers increases, we see one of our national problems being answered. The officers will be ready should the emergency come. Meanwhile, the men who constitute that safeguarding force will be pressing on in their various business activities, virile, vigorous, and strengthened by the discipline and experience which their training for the national service will have added to their education.

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